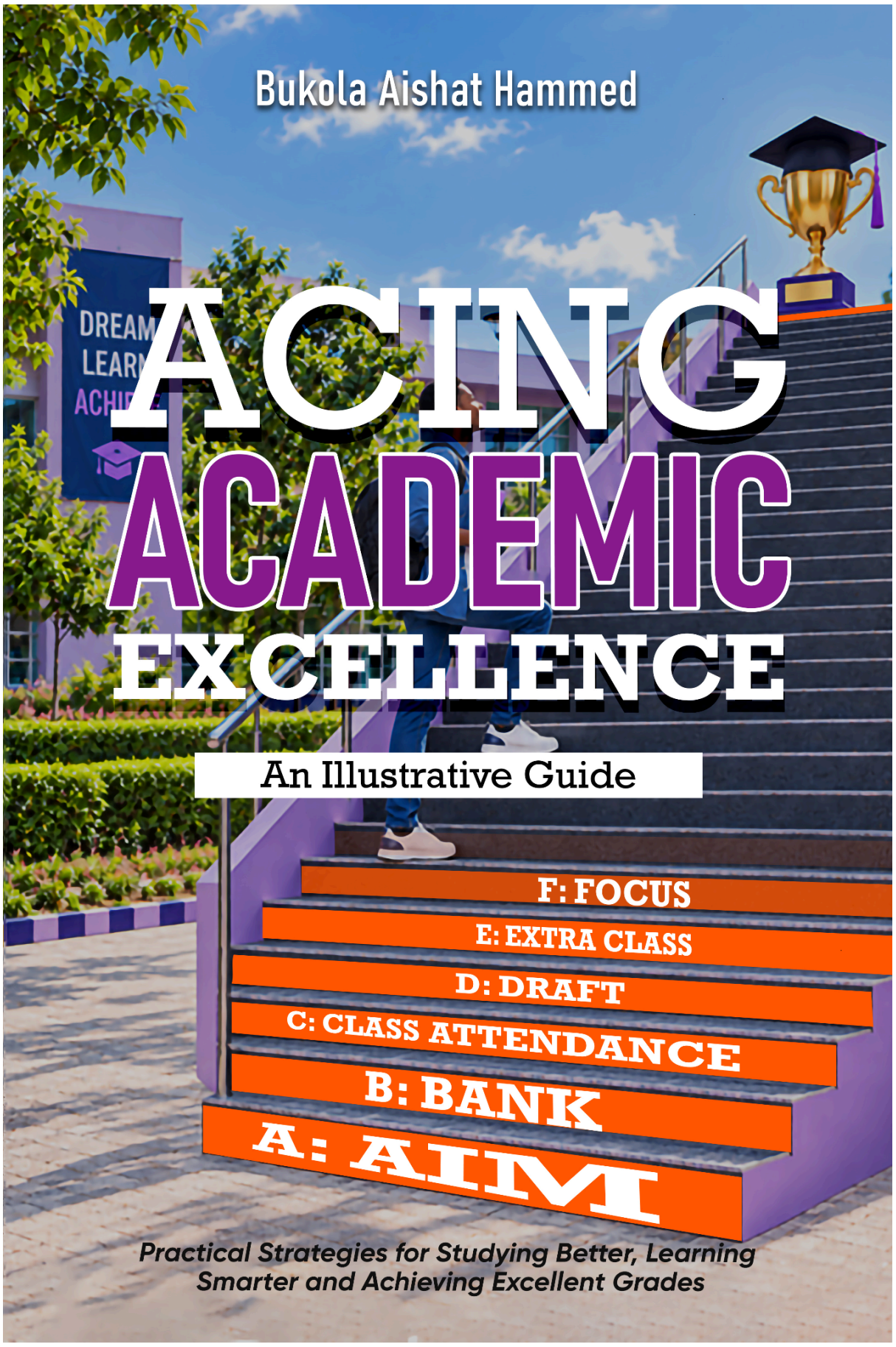
Bukola Aishat Hammed
ACING
ACADEMIC
EXCELLENCE
An Illustrative Guide
F: FOCUS
E: EXTRA CLASS
D: DRAFT
C: CLASS ATTENDANCE
B: BANK
A: AIM
Practical Strategies for Studying Better, Learning Smarter and Achieving Excellent Grades

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ACING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: AN ILLUSTRATIVE GUIDE

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PREFACE

Many students desire excellent grades, yet they often struggle to understand exactly what they need to do to achieve them. They study hard, attend classes, complete assignments, and prepare for examinations, but sometimes the results do not reflect the effort they have invested. This can be frustrating and discouraging.

Acing Academic Excellence: an illustrative guide was written to bridge that gap. This book is a practical and illustrative guide to studying more effectively, developing better academic habits, and achieving excellent grades.

It is based not merely on theories about education or studying, but on personal experiences from academic environments in both Nigeria and Russia. Having studied at prestigious universities in both countries, I discovered that although educational systems, teachers, grading methods, and academic cultures may differ, many of the fundamental principles required for academic success remain remarkably similar.

The techniques and strategies presented in this book are drawn from what I personally used throughout my academic journey. They are intended to help students understand not only **what to study**, but also **how to study, when to study, how to prepare for examinations, and how to approach their education more strategically**.

My journey to academic excellence was not always straightforward. I was once an average student in secondary school. At one point, I even told my father that all the students in my class were better than me. There were about sixteen students in the class, and I genuinely believed that I could not compete with many of them academically. My father's response changed my perspective. He told me: “You can also be better, if not the best. All you need is the desire to study better and differently.”

Those words became the motivation I needed.

I began to change the way I approached my studies. Instead of simply studying harder, I learned to study **better and differently**. Gradually, my results improved, and before completing my secondary education, I had become one of the top students in my class. I carried that mindset into university and continued to maintain a strong academic standard.

This experience taught me an important lesson: **academic excellence is not necessarily reserved for students who have always been naturally brilliant.**

Sometimes, the difference lies in discovering the right approach, developing effective habits, remaining consistent, and being willing to change what is not working.

The tips in this book have been arranged in **alphabetical order**, primarily to make them easier to navigate, remember, and revisit. You do not necessarily have to apply every technique. Pick a few that resonate with you, experiment with them, and gradually develop your own effective study system.

My hope is that these practical guidelines will help you approach your studies differently, make better use of your time and abilities, and ultimately achieve results that more accurately reflect your potential.

Academic excellence is possible. Sometimes, all it takes is the desire to study better and differently.

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A

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AIM

Every course comes with its own level of difficulty and if you want to achieve excellent grades, you need to have a **decisive and realistic AIM**.

By about halfway through the semester, you should have a reasonable idea of how difficult a particular course is for you. Your understanding of the lectures, your performance in tests and assignments and how well you are coping with the course can help you make this assessment.

For example, after considering all the requirements of a particular course (tests, examinations, practicals, assignments and other assessments), you may feel that 55% is a realistic result based on your current level of preparation. At this point, you are only making an assessment; you have not yet set your AIM.

Now, you need to push yourself a little further and set a higher but realistic target. You might decide that your AIM is 70%. To achieve this, you need a plan. Your plan could include:

- Attending all lectures and practical classes.
- Completing and submitting all assignments on time.
- Preparing all required reports, term papers and practicals properly.
- Identifying the areas of the course you find most difficult.
- Allocating enough time to study and revise those areas.

The tests and examinations are another important part of the plan. This is where you need to understand your own studying prowess and ask yourself these questions:

- How easy do I find it to study this course and understand the information?
- Can I study all the course materials and retain what I have learned?
- Do I need to study everything, or do I need to spend more time on certain areas?
- How much of what I study can I remember during an examination?

- Can I study this course effectively on my own, or do I need help from course mates or a tutor?

Try This Guide

- Assess your current performance in each course honestly.
- Set a specific but realistic target for each course.
- Identify what you need to do to reach that target.
- Give more attention to courses or topics you find difficult.
- Review your progress before the examination period and adjust your plan if necessary.

B

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BANKING ON OLD KNOWLEDGE

Many times, you may study a topic thoroughly and, for reasons you cannot immediately explain, forget what you have read. This is where you need to **bank on old knowledge**.

Never disregard what you have previously learned. Sometimes, old knowledge becomes useful when you cannot immediately remember a new method.

During my bachelor's degree, I was in my second year when I wrote a chemistry test that involved calculating the molar mass of a compound. I could not remember the exact steps the lecturer had used in class. However, I remembered that during my secondary-school education, I had learned another method of arriving at the same answer. I applied the method I remembered, and fortunately, the steps were valid and I arrived at the correct answer.

The lesson for me was simple: knowledge acquired in the past does not become useless simply because you have moved to a higher level of education. Sometimes, a concept you learned in secondary school may help you understand a university-level topic. A method from one course may also help you solve a problem in another course.

Try This Guide

- Before concluding that you have forgotten everything, ask yourself what you already know about the topic.
- Connect new concepts to things you learned previously.
- Review old notes when they can help you understand a difficult topic.
- If you forget a particular method, consider whether you know another valid method.
- Do not underestimate knowledge simply because you acquired it several years ago.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is important to define what **academic excellence** means to you.

For me, performing excellently in my academics was important because I believed it could open doors to better opportunities. I wanted to be able to present my results anywhere with pride and know that I had given my education my best effort.

Your reasons may be different. Perhaps you want to graduate with a first class. Perhaps you want a particular GPA. Perhaps you simply want to pass a difficult course. Perhaps you want to become knowledgeable enough to contribute meaningfully to your profession.

Whatever your reason is, let it be clear to you. Even if an excellent grade is not your primary goal, you still need to study. When you study properly, you gain something beyond the grade: **knowledge.**

Grades are important, but they are not the only measure of what you have gained from education.